

In cooperation with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA), the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ), and the Fremont County Weed and Pest District

Pesticides in Ground Water - Fremont County, Wyoming, 1998-99

In 1991, members of local, State, and Federal governments, as well as industry and interest groups, formed the Ground-water and Pesticide Strategy Committee to prepare the State of Wyoming's generic Management Plan for Pesticides in Ground Water. Part of this management plan is to sample and analyze Wyoming's ground water for pesticides. In 1995, the U.S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the Ground-water and Pesticide Strategy Committee, began statewide implementation of the sampling component of the State of Wyoming's generic Management Plan for Pesticides in Ground Water. In 1998, baseline monitoring began in Fremont County.

PESTICIDES IN GROUND WATER

Synthetic organic pesticides are used to control weeds, insects, and other organisms in a wide variety of agricultural and nonagricultural settings. The use of pesticides has helped to make the United States the world's largest producer of food (Barbash and Resek, 1996). Pesticide use, however, has also been accompanied by concerns about potential adverse effects on the environment and human health. A potential pathway for the transport of pesticides is

through hydrologic systems, which supply water for both humans and natural ecosystems. Water is one of the primary ways pesticides are transported from an application area to other locations in the environment (fig. 1) (Barbash and Resek, 1996).

Pesticide contamination of ground water is a national issue because of the widespread use of pesticides, the expense and difficulty of remediating ground water, and the fact that ground water is used for drinking water by about

50 percent of the Nation's population. Concern about pesticides in ground water is especially acute in rural agricultural areas where over 95 percent of the population relies upon ground water for their drinking water (Solley and others, 1998), although application rates and the variety of pesticides used may be greater in urban areas.

WYOMING'S PESTICIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Ground-water and Pesticide Strategy Committee (GPSC) has developed the generic State Management Plan for Pesticides in Ground Water for the State of Wyoming (SMP) (Wyoming Ground-water and Pesticides Strategy Committee, 1999). The SMP is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in order for organizations and individuals to continue using certain pesticides in Wyoming. The SMP includes information relating to organizations and individuals involved with the implementation of the SMP, methods of preventing ground-water contamination, ground-water monitoring, and what the responses will be if pesticides are detected in ground water.

One critical part of the SMP is ground-water monitoring. The ground-water monitoring program has two phases. The first phase involves baseline monitoring, which is an initial survey of pesticides in a county's ground water. The second phase is problem identification monitoring, which is used to gather more information about the ground water

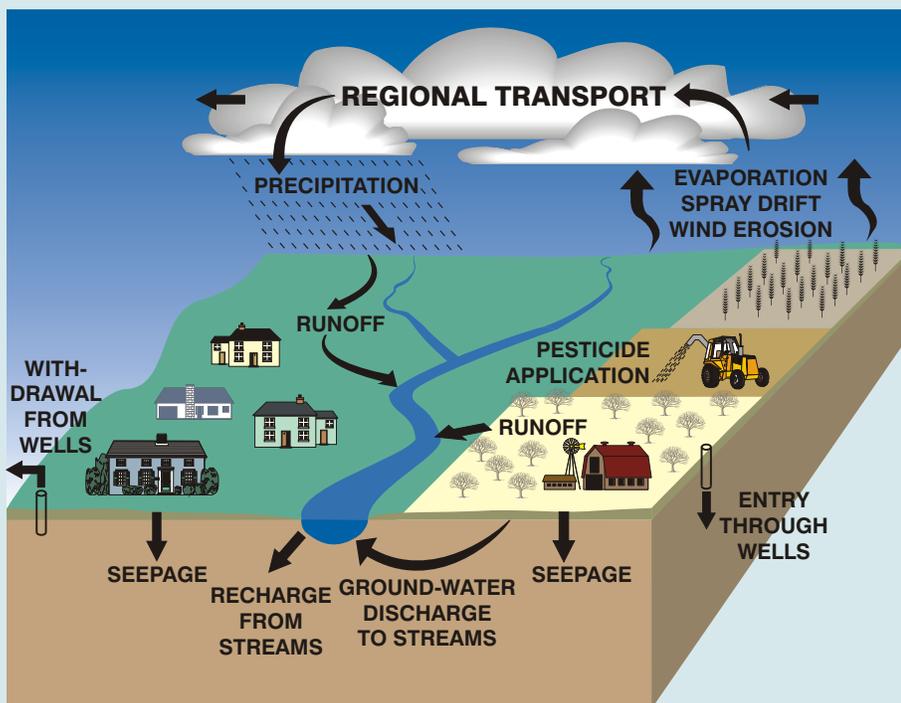


Figure 1. Pathways of pesticide movement in the hydrologic cycle (modified from Barbash and Resek, 1996).

Table 1. Baseline monitoring for pesticides in Fremont County, 1998-99.

[$\mu\text{g/L}$, micrograms per liter; trace indicates pesticide detected, but at a concentration too small to quantify]

Pesticide	Pesticide trade name	Pesticide action ¹	Number of detections/ number of samples ²	Laboratory minimum reporting limit ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	Maximum concentration ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	Average concentration of detections ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	Safe drinking water standard ³ ($\mu\text{g/L}$)
Focal pesticides detected in Fremont County ground water							
Atrazine	Aatrex	Selective herbicide	17/40	0.001	0.03	0.01	3
DCPA	Dacthal	Selective herbicide	2/40	0.002	trace	trace	⁴ 16
Hexazinone	Velpar	Selective herbicide	2/38	0.03	0.7	0.5	⁵ 200
Picloram	Tordon	Systemic herbicide	4/40	0.05	2	0.8	500
Simazine	Princep	Selective herbicide	5/40	0.005	0.01	0.006	4
Tebuthiuron	Spike	Herbicide	8/40	0.01	0.08	0.04	⁵ 500
Non-focal pesticides detected in Fremont County ground water							
Prometon	Pramitol	Non-selective herbicide	10/40	0.02	0.1	0.04	⁵ 100
Focal pesticides not detected in Fremont County ground water							
2,4-D Alachlor	Aldicarb Aldicarb Sulfone ⁵	Aldicarb Sulfoxide ⁵ Bromacil		Clopyralid Cyanazine	Dicamba Metolachlor	Metribuzin Telone	
Focal pesticides not analyzed in Fremont County ground water (no method of analysis available)							
Difenzoquat				Metsulfuron			

¹Meister, R.T., 1996

²Each of the 20 wells were sampled twice.

³EPA Maximum Contaminant Level unless otherwise noted (EPA, 1996).

⁴WDEQ Drinking Water Equivalent Level (WDEQ, 1993).

⁵EPA Lifetime Health Advisory Level (EPA, 1996).

⁶Degradation product of Aldicarb.

near wells with significant pesticide detections.

Baseline monitoring is prioritized by a county rank and the vulnerability of the county's ground water to pesticides. During the development of the SMP, the GPSC evaluated each county in Wyoming to determine the potential vulnerability of the county's ground water to pesticides. Each county was ranked based on the extent of cropland and urban areas in the county, as well as



the amount of pesticides sold within the county in 1991 (Wyoming Ground-water and Pesticides Strategy Committee, 1999).

A ground-water vulnerability map was prepared for the uppermost or shallowest aquifer by the University of Wyoming Spatial Data and Visualization Center (SDVC). A Geographic Information System was used to overlay seven coverages describing hydro-geology and land use. The map produced was used to assist in the selection of monitoring sites in each county. The monitoring focuses on areas where the ground water is most vulnerable.

The GPSC selected 18 pesticides (focal pesticides) and 2 degradation products to be sampled as part of the SMP (table 1). An additional 66 pesticides and degradation products are included in the U.S. Geological Survey analytical protocol, resulting in possible detections of non-focal pesticides. Ground water from all wells in the baseline monitoring program was analyzed for the pesticides listed in table 1, with the exception of

difenzoquat and metsulfuron because analytical methods were not available for their analysis.

The goal of the sampling program is to collect ground-water samples for pesticide analyses in all 23 Wyoming counties. The ground-water sampling part of the SMP began in Goshen County in 1995. Sampling in Park and Washakie Counties was conducted in 1997, and completed by 1998. In August 1998, sampling began in Fremont, Lincoln, and Laramie Counties. The sampling for these three counties was completed in May 1999.

GROUND-WATER MONITORING IN FREMONT COUNTY

The ground water in Fremont County was ranked the fourth most vulnerable to pesticide contamination in Wyoming. The vulnerability map for Fremont County (fig. 2) was created by the SDVC (Hammerlink and Arneson, 1998). Shallow alluvial and terrace deposits were identified as the most vulnerable areas in the county.

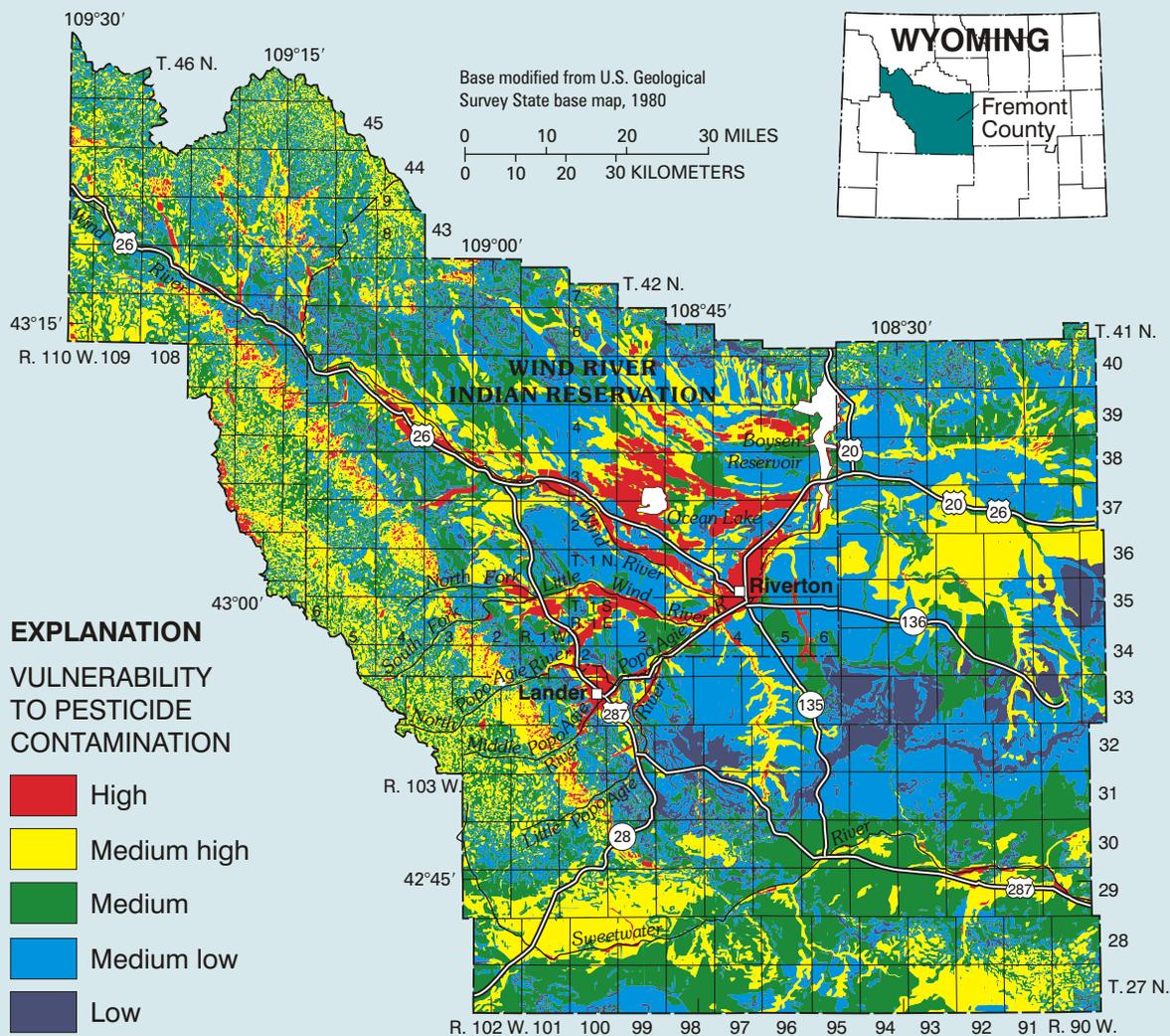


Figure 2. Vulnerability of Fremont County ground water to pesticide contamination (from Hammerlink and Arneson, 1998).

Twenty sites were selected for baseline monitoring in Fremont County (fig. 3). All wells were located in the most vulnerable areas (shown as red or yellow in fig. 2). The wells were inspected and selected with the assistance of the Fremont County Weed and Pest District. All sites were sampled twice, late summer 1998 and spring 1999. These time periods were selected to correspond with the shallowest or deepest water-table conditions.

Six of the 18 focal pesticides and 1 non-focal pesticide were detected in Fremont County (table 1). At least one pesticide was detected in 13 of the 20 wells sampled in Fremont County. All detected concentrations of pesticides were less than the drinking water standards (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1996; WDEQ, 1993). The laboratory minimum reporting limit is the lowest concentration at which the pesticide can be quantified. Forty-four percent of the detections were trace quantities. A trace quantity indicates the

pesticide was detected, but at a concentration too small to quantify.

The most commonly detected pesticide in Fremont County was atrazine. Atrazine was also the most commonly detected pesticide in Goshen, Park, Washakie, and Laramie Counties. Atrazine is an agricultural herbicide typically used for weed control in corn and other crops (Farm Chemicals Handbook, 1996).

The second most commonly detected pesticide in Fremont County was prometon. Prometon is the active ingredient in Pramitol. Prometon is a general use pesticide and its detection is typically associated with urban land use (Barbash and others, 1999). Picloram was the pesticide detected at the highest concentration in Fremont County ground water at 2 micrograms per liter (parts per billion). Picloram is the active ingredient in Tordon, an herbicide, and is one of the most commonly used pesticides in Wyoming.

MONITORING STATUS AND DATA AVAILABILITY

The sampling results have been given to local groups interested in pesticides in ground water in Fremont County. The information can be used by citizens and local governments to help understand current conditions. Results of the Fremont County sampling can be found in Mason and others, 1999, and Swanson and others, 2000. Results of all analyses, including sampling of all counties to date, are available from the U.S. Geological Survey in Cheyenne.

—Prepared by Cheryl A. Eddy-Miller and Jodi R. Norris

—Layout and final illustrations by Suzanne C. Roberts

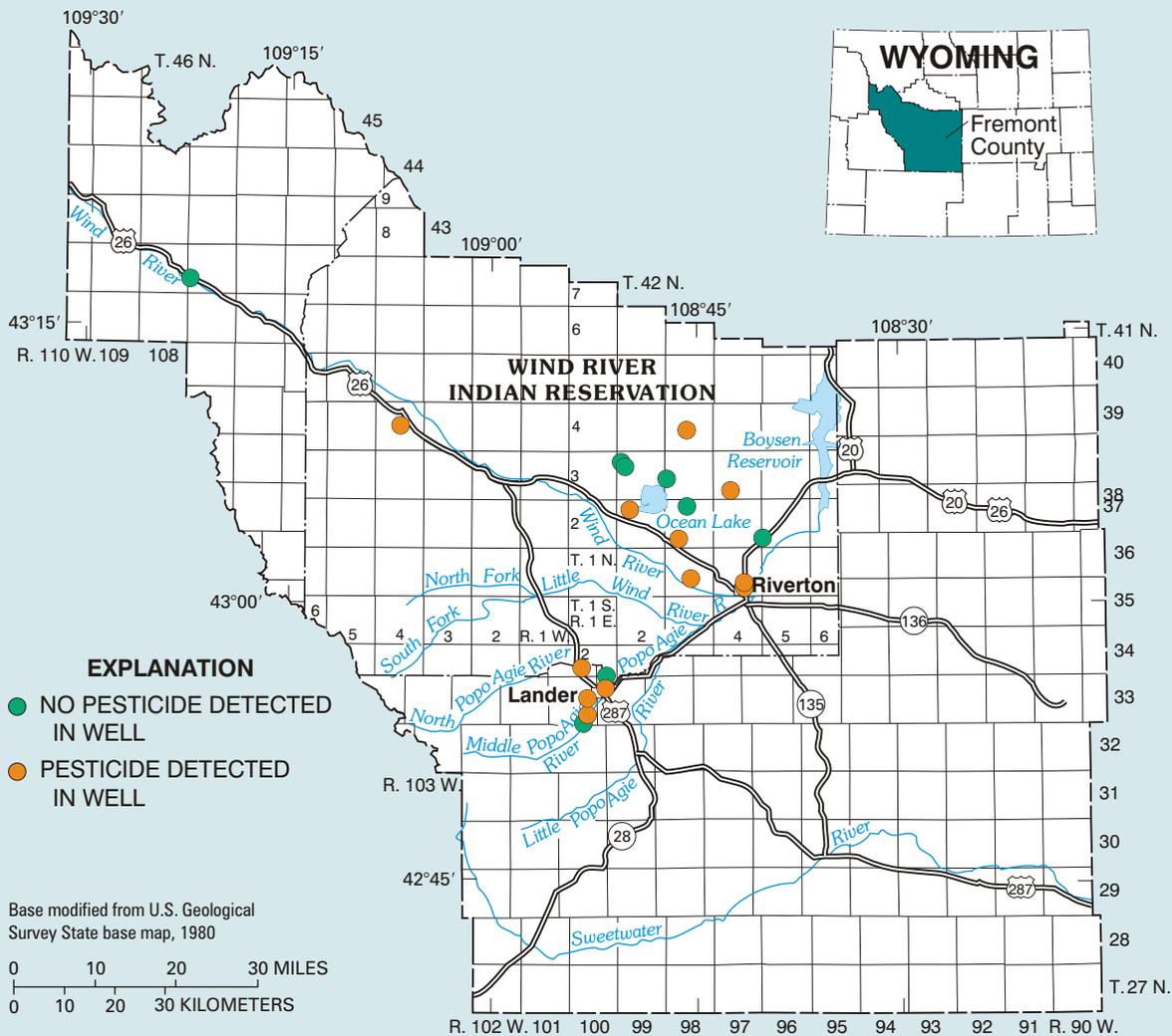


Figure 3. Location of wells sampled in Fremont County, and notation of pesticide detection in each well.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Jim Bigelow
 Wyoming Department of Agriculture
 2219 Carey Avenue
 Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002
 (307) 777-7324

Kevin Frederick
 Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality,
 Water Quality Division
 4th Floor, Herschler Building
 Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002
 (307) 777-7781

District Chief
 U.S. Geological Survey, WRD
 2617 E. Lincolnway, Suite B
 Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001
 (307) 778-2931
Email: state_rep_wy@usgs.gov
Internet: http://wy.water.usgs.gov/

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